

# The Reality of Eternal Judgment: Why Hell is an Actual Place

by Jeremy James



Street preacher arrested in London in February 2019.  
His Bible was taken from him.

We have all heard about the pastors and preachers of old who railed against the wrongdoing and misdeeds of the sinner and warned loudly and sternly of the threat of eternal damnation. Generally, whenever these men are mentioned today, it is with a sigh of relief, as though their absence from the church is a sign of greater maturity. According to our modern commentators those old-timers placed too much attention on everlasting torment and underestimated – or simply didn't understand – the breadth and depth of God's mercy and love.

Such 'fire and brimstone' preaching, they say, was counter-productive. It missed the good news of the gospel and failed to celebrate the wonderful truth that we are now under grace, not the laws and prohibitions of the Old Testament.

## **Many doubt whether hell is a real place**

This attitude is so deeply entrenched within the church that a great many believers even doubt whether hell is a real place. As they see it, while some souls may have to endure a limited period of therapeutic suffering after death, no-one will suffer eternal damnation. Everyone will enter heaven and enjoy the presence of God eventually.

A just and loving Creator would ensure that this would happen. After all, they say, Christ died for the sins of the whole world, so why would anyone be excluded? If we are all sinners and no-one 'deserves' salvation, then it is wrong – surely – to select one part of humanity and to exclude the other.

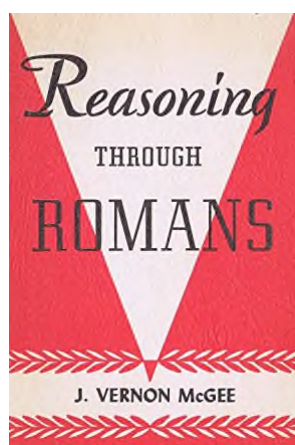
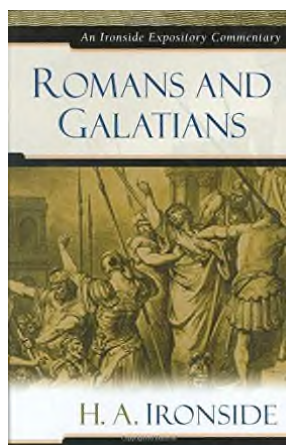
## **Universalism**

This belief is known as Universalism. It is often accompanied by another, related belief, namely that the supposedly small number of wicked souls who resolutely refuse to accept the gift of salvation will cease to exist at the point of death. Their souls will be extinguished and all trace of their existence will disappear from creation. The latter belief is sometimes called Extinctionism.

On the surface these two beliefs – Universalism and Extinctionism – may appear rather harmless. It might seem possible to hold to one or both of them and still believe truly in God's Word. But it isn't. As tolerant or compassionate as they may sound, they are completely false and conflict violently with the core principles of Christianity.

Let's see why.

Firstly, they reject the basic truth that man in his natural state is utterly alienated from God. The first three chapters of Romans spell this out very clearly. If he should refuse to seek God while here in the flesh, he will continue without Him into eternity.

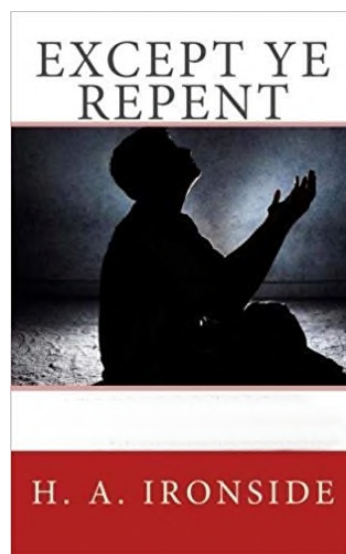


## **Universalism is effectively a rejection of sin**

Universalism is effectively a rejection of sin. Taken to its logical conclusion, it is a rejection of Biblical truth. While it seems to acknowledge the *existence* of sin, it denies the power of sin and the damage it has done. Since it makes no real distinction between a sinner who repents and one who doesn't, it refuses to acknowledge what Christ has done to achieve a reconciliation between God and man. Even worse, it refuses to accept that man must repent before he can be restored to God in righteousness and truth.

Secondly, if Universalism were true, then man could enter heaven without ever having to confess his own wickedness! This is clearly absurd. It would also allow him to receive salvation without having to admit his need for a Savior. This too is absurd.

So why do many Christians – or those who profess to be Christian – find Universalism so attractive? The answer is simple: It relieves man of the need to repent. It allows him to continue to live by his own strength, independent of God. If even once in his life he saw himself as he truly is, a wretched creature steeped in the bile of his own pride, he would reach out to Christ in true humility and accept the gift of salvation – by faith through grace. But the Universalist deception prevents him from doing this.



Of Satan's many beguiling lies, the false doctrine of Universalism is one of the most seductive. This is why it is central to Eastern philosophy and the New Age movement. Both Hinduism and Buddhism teach that all souls are saved eventually, that the great cycle of transmigration will come to an end when all of one's karma – or debt to life – has finally been repaid.

### **Purgatory**

The false Catholic doctrine of purgatory is cut from the same cloth. The Vatican teaches that our good works here on earth, plus the various graces accrued through one's participation in the Roman sacraments, will save one from hell or eternal damnation. However it also teaches that, for the vast majority of 'baptised' souls, this will not suffice to cleanse one from all sin. This can be achieved only through a period of suffering after death, of unspecified duration, in the fires of purgatory.

By means of this false doctrine, the Catholic Church denies the sufficiency of salvation through faith in Christ and enslaves its members in an endless quest to accumulate enough grace to avoid purgatory – all the while peddling its own version of Universalism where everyone is saved eventually.

## **The Sin Question**

Universalism and Extinctionism each try to avoid, or simply ignore, the devastating consequences of sin. They do this primarily by reducing sin to an event and denying the damage it has done to our spiritual condition. The Fall was an event – yes – but an event so traumatic that its malignant effects could only be undone by the incarnation and death of Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of God.

As Christians we all need to dwell on this. Sin is so devastating that God alone can deal with it. We, of ourselves, in our natural state, are enslaved by sin. And when sin has done its work, the result is death. This is the inevitable and necessary outcome in all cases, without exception.

As born-again believers we are saved **ONLY** because someone else paid our sin debt! And he could do this **ONLY** because we repented of our sin and turned to him as our personal Savior. This is why every true believer has a one-to-one relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. We asked him personally to save us, and he did so. Just as the Father knows each of His angels by name, Jesus knows each of his saints by name.

Man cannot save himself by his works, he cannot avoid being judged for his sin by the supposed extinction of his soul, and he cannot expect salvation unless he repents and comes by faith to Christ.



**A Christian church in Indonesia, set alight by a mob in 2015.**

### *Verses to Contemplate*

**"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" – Matthew 23:33**

**"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:" – Mark 3:29**

**"Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." – Isaiah 66:3**

**"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." – John 5:29**

**"Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." – Romans 13:2**

**"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." – Isaiah 66:23-24**

**"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes; And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD." – Jeremiah 29:21-23**



## The wicked refuse to be judged

The wicked are convinced that they can defy God's judgment, that by outright rejection of His sovereignty they can avoid being held to account for their actions when they were living here on earth. They refuse to be judged, they refuse to accept Jesus as the appointed judge of all mankind, and they regard the laws established by our Father as a deliberate attempt to suppress our spiritual freedom.

This attitude permeates the works of darkness. Those who wilfully reject the salvation of Christ are doing so in the false belief that they owe their existence to someone or something other than the LORD God of the Bible. They concoct to their own satisfaction all kinds of reasons to explain why God has no right to judge them.

In their fallen condition they find the whole idea of judgment utterly repugnant. Many explode in volleys of anger when a true believer dares to suggest that a just and holy God will one day hold everyone to account.

Their two favorite ways of explaining their unlimited liberty – their professed right to do as they choose – are that they themselves are gods in their own right and that a different god, not the LORD God of the Bible, has opened their eyes. This 'other god' is Baal, the best known mask of the Adversary in the Old Testament.



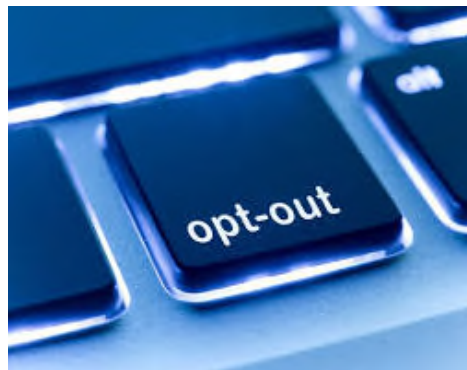
Jeremiah breaking the potter's vessel in the Valley of Hinnom. [Etching 1772]

**“Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom... Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee...” – Jeremiah 19**

## **The growing appeal of Universalism**

In the troubled times in which we are now living, where apostasy is rampant, the false teaching of Universalism will appeal to many. This appeal will increase enormously in the years ahead as the Catholic Church, the Emerging Evangelical Church, and the neo-pagan religions use it to lure the masses into a One World Religion. Their teaching that a god of unconditional love will accept everyone, regardless of their faith or spiritual condition, will be extremely attractive in a world where the traditional moral order seems to have dissolved. It will stand in stark contrast to the ancient belief – much reviled by these people – which holds that **“many are called but few are chosen.”**

They will also argue that a god of unlimited, unconditional love would allow recidivist souls to “opt out” – or cease to exist – if they so choose.



Over the past eighty years or so the church has preached the gospel largely from the standpoint of love. God loves you; He has a plan for you; He sent His Son to save you, to pay your sin debt and intercede on your behalf before His throne; and when you die he will bring you home to live with Him in eternity. This is certainly a wonderful message, a message filled with unspeakable joy, but it is easily misunderstood. Unless we see why God had to act as He did, we will not recognize the magnitude of what Christ did on our behalf or the universal devastation caused by sin. To an unsaved person the gift may seem irrelevant because he has absolutely no understanding of sin and his own fallen condition.

## **Two Scripturally valid ways to preach the gospel**

We can preach the gospel with love to receptive ears, but to those whose hearing has been hardened by the world, we may have to preach the gospel with both love and fear. There is a clear Biblical injunction for this.

**“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” – Jude 1:20-23**

Note those words: **“save with fear”**. Jude is alluding here to those souls who resist the gospel spoken with love. With these obstinate individuals we are obliged to spell out the awful consequences of sin for all who reject the gospel. The apostle Paul describes the punishment that awaits everyone who makes this choice:

**“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**

Both passages refer to the fire of God’s judgment. Paul also includes a definition of hell, namely **“everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord [i.e. Jesus], and from the glory of his power.”**

Anyone who imagines that he can see an alternative mode of salvation in God’s Word really needs to study these passages. Their message is stark and unequivocal. A terrible fate awaits all who wilfully reject the gift of salvation through faith in Christ.

As Paul put it in Romans: **“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness...” – Romans 11:22.**

## **Works have nothing to do with salvation**

For those who expect to find a graduated scale of assessment after death, the shock will be horrifying. There will exist only two possible outcomes: (a) perfect salvation for all of those who came to Christ while they were living here on earth, or (b) eternal damnation for all who reject the gospel of salvation. Despite what all the false religions of the world are teaching, our works will not affect this outcome.

Works have nothing to do with salvation. However, as the Epistle of James makes abundantly clear, all true believers will give ample evidence of their faith through their charitable works and acts of mercy. Paul reminds us several times that these same works will also have a direct bearing on our reward in heaven, which very likely refers to our proximity and service to Christ in eternity.



**Paying attention.**



## Rebellious deafness

As true evangelists we may have to reach the ‘hard of hearing’ with a message that no-one wants to hear. The wrath of God is exactly as Paul describes it – **“the terror of the Lord”**. Once we understand what this means – and as born-again believers we should be very clear about this – we are able to convey to others a basic truth which the world will never teach them, namely that God is both perfect and perfectly just. For this reason He must punish sin, ALL sin. If the individual has refused to allow the blood of Christ to cover his sins, then he will have to account for them himself:

**“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” – 2 Corinthians 5:10-11**

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. But we don’t have this fear in our natural, fallen state. It is something we have to learn: **“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Psalm 34:11)**. This learning process is directly connected with our study of God’s Word:

**“...Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.” – Deuteronomy 4:10**

At the end of the day it is God Himself who does this:

**“...I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”  
– Jeremiah 32:40**

The Nicolaitan church may try to teach the fear of God by its own devices, but it is deceiving the sheep and causing them to err:

**“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:” – Isaiah 29:13**

The fear of God cannot be taught by the precept of men. It comes only through the power of the Holy Spirit and constitutes therein the beginning of all wisdom.



**Still paying attention.**

## Where is the fear of God in the church today?

There is a marked absence of any fear of God among those in positions of leadership and stewardship within the church. They are a rare and dying breed.

The Nicolaitan church has no fear of God. Christ rebuked some of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, but his greatest rebuke by far was reserved for the Nicolaitans, a church which is virtually immune to criticism of any kind:

**“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:” – Revelation 3:17**

Most true believers today are well acquainted with the “I am rich” gang, the smug, self-satisfied pastors who claim they “have need of nothing.” They are also well acquainted with the coterie of professing Christians who follow them, who are equally blind to the spiritual collapse of the church and completely oblivious to their own wretched condition.

These are the people, devoid of shame, who will be most receptive to the Universalist heresy when it starts to gather momentum. The idea that God will judge mankind and condemn non-believers to eternal damnation will seem incredibly outdated, a primitive carry-over from bygone times.

They will teach instead that, since all men are equal, that no-one will be lost, and that the unconditional love of God will overcome all differences and manmade distinctions.

We are already familiar with the seditious emphasis on equality in our modern culture, where the entire moral order is being systematically undermined by arguments based on equal rights. When these specious excuses supersede and sweep aside all personal responsibility, sin is forgotten. The Universalist heresy will fit in perfectly with this amoral mindset.



## CONCLUSION

In his pride-filled fallen condition, man does not want to believe that hell is a real place. He finds the whole idea repulsive. Alas, the idea which he ought to find repulsive – the rejection of the salvation offered by Christ – is trivialized as a philosophical position, a lifestyle choice, an option which, spiritually speaking, he is entitled to exercise. How can God condemn anyone for making a choice? It makes no sense, they say.

It is a mark of how far man has fallen that this kind of reasoning is so prevalent today. In his pride man rejects – with more fury than ever before – the notion that he is inherently wicked, that he is lost in the depths of sin and rebellion, and that he needs a Savior. The Nicolaitan church is infested with leaders who secretly hold to this view. This is why there is virtually no preaching today on sin, hell, damnation, and the power of Satan to twist and pervert God's Word.

If we walk with these people we will gradually slide into the same blindness and complacency that defiles their walk with God.

Whose company do you like to share? Personally, I seek out those who fear God. Everything they say is immensely refreshing. They are often the most 'ordinary' and unassuming people one could find, and yet they are priceless. I cherish every one of them.

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**April 18, 2019**

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